

about the
idea of a

**PALESTINIAN
STATE**

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ABOUT THE IDEA OF A PALESTINIAN STATE

By Emile Touma

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These days we hear the appeal for the establishment of a secular, democratic Palestinian state, in which Moslems, Jews and Christians would live in cooperation and equality. What is the significance of this plan ?

The sharpening of the crisis in Arab-Israeli relations subsequent to the June 1967 war, has quickly raised the Palestinian problem to the first place and has stressed the necessity of its solution.

This does not come as a surprise to us, for since 1948 we Communists have emphasized that there is no possibility of achieving a stable and just settlement of Israeli-Arab relations without solving this problem.

The question is: How do the Arab forces, who consider themselves a part of the anti-imperialist camp, approach this problem and what are the solutions proposed by them?

Here two main currents can be pointed out: One current, which accepts the existence of the State of Israel in this form or another. It fights for the liquidation of the Israeli imperialist-supported aggression, and for achieving the rights of the Palestinian Arab people. To this current belong the Communists, various democratic forces and a number of leaders of progressive Arab countries. The second current completely rejects the existence of the state of Israel. It calls for the establishment of a Palestinian state, which in one form or another would recognize the rights of the Israelis. To this current belong a part of the leaders of progressive Arab countries, and, in general, the Palestinian Arab organizations.

Here I wish to dwell on the ideology of the second current, according to the material which I was able to get

hold of, and according to my ability to orient myself in this matter.

The Reserved Recognition

First of all, one has to point out that the appeal for "throwing the Jews into the sea," which used to be reiterated by a number of demagogues --especially Palestinians-- has disappeared in the Arab world, at both state level and popular level. The position that one has to recognize the Jews in Israel (or in "occupied Palestine," according to the terminology of some Arab circles) has penetrated the broadest strata. This recognition is finding its expression in the solutions now being proposed.

The first solution says: "Establishment of a democratic Arab Palestinian state on Palestinian soil, in which all citizens, Moslems, Jews and Christians, will enjoy the same rights and duties." (Platform of Al-Fat'h).

The second solution says: Establishment of a Palestinian state "on the basis of a democratic solution of the present conflict, founded on co-existence of the two peoples-- the Arab and the Jewish," (Platform of the Democratic Popular Front, in Al Hurriyeh, 1.9.69.)

The proponents of these two solutions start from the premise of the cancellation of the existence of the State of Israel, while differently evaluating the essence of the Israelis. Whereas the supporters of the second solution recognize the Jewish people, the supporters of the first solution reject this recognition. For this purpose the latter divide -- in the period of the awakening Arab nationalism and the strengthening of the movement for Arab unity --the Palestinian Arab people into communities, so as to enable them to raise the slogan: An Arab Palestinian state in which the "Moslem, Christian and Jewish citizens will enjoy the same rights and duties."

Thus the problem of recognizing the Israeli people receives great importance because a number of progressive,

Anti-imperialist persons are "philosophizing" about the problem of recognition of this people, to arrive at a number of dangerous conclusions.

Among these persons is, for example, Ahmed Habil al-Halali, who rejects the recognition of the Israeli Jews as a nation, basing himself upon the classical Marxist definition that "a nation does not evolve but through a prolonged and complicated historical process ruled by objective laws." (Al-Kateb, Oct. 1967, p. 10.)

In my opinion, all the various anti-imperialist forces ought to free themselves from this position, which constitutes an obstacle.

It is correct, first of all, that the Jewish communities in the world do not constitute one nation, as Zionism alleges. It is also correct that nations have evolved in the course of history through a ~~complicated and~~ prolonged process.

But it is also true that the Jews who came to Palestine in the time of the Mandate, and to Israel after its establishment, crystallized and are crystallizing as an Israeli nation. This happened and is happening not through a prolonged development, but before our eyes, as many of the objective conditions (education, radio and other means of communication) and subjective conditions (the escape from the Nazi persecutions and the common consciousness regarding the Jewish holocaust in the second world war) made it possible to compress centuries into tens of years and these made and are making the Jews in this country into one consolidated people.

The Jews who came to this country, have built a common economy, ~~have~~ started developing a defined culture, ~~have~~ used the Hebrew language at both state and popular levels, and have lived in a common territory. In this way they received the characteristics of a nation.

True, many of the immigrants have preserved the traditions, and national manners of the nations among which they had lived. True, there are communities of immigrants

which till this day are consolidated within their community circle and, in general, marry within their community. But reality shows that the development in direction of a fusion of their national traits is assuming an increasingly quicker tempo, the larger the percentage of the young generation is becoming. 40% of the Jewish citizens of the country have been born in the country. All the children pass through unified stages of education which puts on them the same national imprint.

Therefore the aptest definition of this people is: the Israeli people; and there is an ever-increasing difference between it and the member of the Jewish communities in the world who consider themselves as Soviet in the Soviet Union, Americans in the USA, English in Britain, etc.

The big struggle of Zionism in the ideological sphere is waged for removing this separating line between the Israeli people and the Jewish communities, for the reactionary purposes of separating the Jewish communities from the general democratic struggle and severing them from this struggle, and also for advancing the reactionary objectives of territorial expansion, which are identical with the objectives of imperialism, and which serve the latter. Therefore, the anti-imperialist Arab and non-Arab forces must deepen this separating line, in order to make it difficult for the aggressive, pro-imperialist Zionist policy. The recognition of the Israeli people and its right to self-definition is a vital need for the campaign against Zionism and imperialism and for freeing the Israeli people from the vise of Zionism.

The aggressiveness of the ruling circles of Israel, who refused and still refuse to recognize the rights of the Palestinian Arab people and who conduct a policy of expansionism and cooperation with imperialism against the Arab national movement -- all that has characterized the official policy of the State of Israel has prevented peace up to now and has systematically fed the attitudes and forces which do not want to reconcile themselves to the existence of the State of Israel.

But the main struggle waged in our region against imperialism, which exploits the conflict for its predatory objectives and the struggle for the rights of the Palestinian Arab people oblige the anti-imperialist forces in the Arab world, the national liberation movement, to act for the elimination of the conflict, to act for a just settlement, and this demands a policy which distinguishes between the ruling circles of Israel and the Israeli people.

Point of Departure and Conclusions

The majority of those who reject the existence of the State of Israel, base themselves on a number of facts connected with its establishment, in order to evaluate it and define a position towards it.

Thus, basing themselves on the facts of the assistance given by British imperialism to Zionism in establishing the Jewish national home in its initial stages, and on the fact of the cooperation of the rulers of Israel with imperialism after the foundation of the State, they have come to the conclusion that "Israel is the continuation of the presence of imperialism in the Arab homeland." Therefore the problem "is no longer a problem of Arabs and Jews, but of a revolutionary Arab movement against the imperialist forces, without any extreme racism." Hence, when Israel renounces its aggression, it will lose the justification for its existence." (Ahmed Nabil al-Halali in Al-Kateb, Oct. 1967, pp. 10, 11, 14.)

Basing himself on this evaluation, Hatem Sadek (in his essay in Al-Ahram, 7/5/69) contends with those who show readiness to consent to the existence of the State of Israel as a normal state, without Zionism, living in peaceful co-existence with the peoples of the region, and implementing the Security Council Resolution, which would justly solve the problem of the Palestinian Arab refugees, whereby the refugees would choose between return to their homeland and receipt of compensations for their properties, if they should not wish to return.

Hatem Sadek declares his consenting to "a number of i-

ideas which present points of departure in the thought of those who call for a non-Zionist Israel." But he rejects them, as the existence of a non-Zionist Israel is impossible. In his view, the following are the reasons for this:

- It is impossible to differentiate between Israel and Zionism, as Zionism finds its real roots in Jewish religion.
- The greater part of the Jews are Zionists, and because of the strong domination of Zionism over world Jewry.
- Because of the connection of interests of imperialism with Israel and Zionism. The establishment of Israel, he writes, "was mainly due to the success of Zionism to serve its interests in the region and those are interlaced, and even are identical, with the aims of world imperialism."

Moreover, the interests of some of the powers - in the past Britain and today mainly the USA - consider Israel and Zionism as the only potent force that can preserve their imperial interests." (Al-Ahram, 7/5/69.)

Natam Sadek and those who maintain this theory, which rejects the feasibility of a distinction between Israel and Zionism, believe that pro-imperialist Zionism has elaborated a long-ranged strategy of expansion, to be carried out in stages. The latest stage was in June 1967. It rejects real peace and it is one of its methods continuously to deal blows at the Arab force, before it might be able to reach a decisive ability, and to dictate terms to the Arab peoples, in order to establish a greater Israel." (Al-Ahram, 6/5/69.)

We shall not debate some points concerning Zionism and its organizational ties with imperialism. For we, the Communists, were the first ones who analyzed Zionism scientifically and exposed its class character and its attachment to imperialism.

The Communists have always stressed the necessity to

distinguish between Zionism and the Jews, between Zionism and Israel.

Therefore they reject the claim that it is impossible to distinguish between Zionism and Israel and that there is no possibility to turn Israel into a normal, non-aggressive state, which will live without aspirations of expansion and in peaceful co-existence with the Arab countries.

Here the problem must be seen at two levels --the ideological level and the practical one, which is subdivided into the regional level and the international one.

It must be emphasized that Zionism, in spite of some traits particular to it, resembles every bourgeois-imperialism, and its fate will not be different from the fate of these ideologies. Therefore the thought of its perpetuity contradicts the understanding of the inevitable disappearance of bourgeois-imperialist ideologies and the inevitable triumph of socialist ideology. The defeat of the Zionist ideology does not mean the disappearance of the State of Israel, in which a class struggle is being waged, just as in every other capitalist country.

This on one hand. And on the other one, it is a fact that the majority of Jews in the world are opposed to Zionist ideology which is based on the idea of the concentration of the Jews in Israel. The sympathy of Jewish circles with Israel and their preparedness to donate to her and to identify themselves with her, have many causes. Zionism influences these circles by means of religion, and exploits anti-semitism. The Zionist organizations intensify their influence by their successful convincing a broad Jewish public opinion that there exists the danger of destruction of the State of Israel and of the Israeli people. Nor must the danger of the Zionist propaganda be underestimated, which exploits the Jewish holocaust in the second world war, in order to arouse feelings of Jewish solidarity and to turn it into a solidarity with Israel under the present reactionary rule.

After the June 1967 war, wide Arab circles have admitted the grave damages caused to the Arab cause in international public opinion by the hysterical chauvinist declaration that had called for "throwing the Jews into the sea", and for "killing old and young."

Then Zionism and imperialism succeeded in arousing not only broad circles among the Jewish communities, but also influential circles among the general democratic movement, to support the political aggressive plans of the rulers of Israel.

The Communist Parties and other anti-imperialist forces in the world needed time and very great efforts till they could expose the cooperation between the rulers of Israel and imperialism, and prove that the June 1967 war was an aggressive war and not one of self-defense.

The Communists believe that those hysterical chauvinist Arab slogans greatly assisted the ruling circles of Israel to convince the Israeli masses, that a danger of real extermination existed. This does not change the fact that the rulers of Israel were sure that no danger was threatening Israel and that they exploited some actions of the Arab states in order to deal a blow at the anti-imperialist Arab states, and to open the war which they had started preparing 10 years before.

It is not correct to claim that the Israelis are fully devoted to the Zionist faith and that they will not renounce it. The Israelis, just as all other peoples, are divided in respect of class and ideology, within their own, the Israeli framework. It is the social struggle that will decide their future. The struggle about the question how to get out of the present conflict in the Middle East will determine the future of Israel. This struggle is being waged today between those who call for the withdrawal from the occupied territories and for the implementation of the Security Council Resolution and those who oppose this call. Here a warning must be sounded against an erroneous evaluation of the future of this struggle in view of the present balance-of-forces, as shown for example by the last elections to the

Knesset. The support given by broad Israeli masses to the ruling parties does not contradict the fact that their interests conflict with the policy of the rulers. The meaning of that support is that the rulers have succeeded in leading astray these masses and that the progressive forces have not yet succeeded in imbuing the masses with a correct conception.

History is full of examples of rulers being successful in leading astray the masses and of the subsequent awakening of those masses and their revealing the truth. Thus was the situation in France at the outset of the dirty war in Algeria, and such is the situation today in USA with respect to the dirty war in Vietnam.

Hence, it is reconciliation and fatalism to think that Zionism will for long be successful in remaining the ruling ideology in Israel. This evaluation assists Zionism, as it makes it difficult to bring consciousness to the masses.

The recognition of the right of the Israeli to live in security in their state liquidates an important weapon used by the rulers of Israel for persuading the Israelis of the justness of their aggressive policy of expansion.

This recognition of the right of the Israeli people to a sovereign existence will deal a heavy blow at the Zionist theory and at its influence upon Jewish communities.

Important circles among the Jewish communities in USA, France and Britain, where Zionism is very active, oppose Zionism, reject the policy of the rulers of Israel and support the rights of the Palestinian Arab people and the rights of the other Arab peoples.

These circles took up these positions at various times and on various occasions, in reaction to Zionist propaganda. Some of them sound out the truth about the Zionist elasm through their personal experience, and others realized the dangers of Zionism and of the aggressiveness of the Israeli rulers in the period following

the June 1967 war.

It is natural that this cognition should continue and expand. But the refusal to recognize the rights of the Israeli people makes this development difficult and plays into the hands of Zionism.

Regarding Zionist practice, it is carried out at two levels - the regional and international.

At the regional level this practice, which has international repercussions, is represented by the policy of the Israeli rulers, who cooperate with imperialism. This policy is intended to defeat the movement for national and social liberation in the Arab world, in order to fortify the imperialist positions that have still remained, and to bring back the old positions. This is a policy based on sabotaging Soviet-Arab friendship and on territorial expansion, at the expense of the Arab peoples.

At the international level, Zionist practice is represented by service to imperialism in general, in order to defend capitalism and to hit at the socialist movements and at the liberation movements. This is expressed by the libels spread by Zionism against the Soviet Union under the pretext of "defense of the Jews in the Soviet Union." Hence the endeavours of Zionism to isolate the progressive Jewish elements in their countries from the movements of social progress. A prominent example for this is the attempt to isolate the Maerican Jews from the movement of resistance to the brutal war in Vietnam. The Israeli rulers did this in a crude manner, when they criticized several Jewish-American organizations on the day of the first general moratorium -- via editorials in the Israeli dailies Hayom and Omer.

It is obvious that Zionism can only carry out various activities, such as turning Israel into a fruitful field of action for the American, British and West German monopolies, and into a striking force against the Arab East, only thanks to the support by imperialism. It is American imperialism which encourages the American Zionists to give donations to Israel, just as it supplies

Israel with the most modern arms. Therefore, the chief fighting task is: to beat imperialism and rout it, as Zionism was and is suckled by imperialism. Without imperialism Zionism cannot exist for long.

In this struggle the Israeli people can take an active part, when they will be convinced by their own experience and by the developments that imperialism constitutes a danger for them and their future, and when they will realize that there exists an alternative which guarantees them a life of peace and independence.

The progressive forces in Israel reiterate daily that the Israelis fall not in defense of their country, but in execution of the plans of the ruling circles, which strive for expansion and serve the interests of imperialism.

These forces emphasize that detaching Israel from imperialism would open before it the road to a stable peace with the Arab world. For the separation of Israel from imperialism would place it at the side of the Arab peoples who are struggling for their national and social liberation. These forces stress that the anti-imperialist forces do not only recognize the right of the Jews to live, but also the right of the Israeli people to self-determination, to sovereign existence in its state. Without this recognition, there is no possibility to mobilize supporters of the right of the Palestinian Arab people to self-determination.

Imperialism and Zionism attempt to divert world public opinion from the right to self-determination of the Palestinian Arab people by inflating every pronouncement, whatever its source, that rejects the right to self-determination of the Israeli people and its state.

At the same time, it has to be emphasized that Zionist practice during the last 25 years has decisively influenced some anti-imperialist Arab circles to oppose the State of Israel. For in the eyes of the Arab peoples Israel was founded on the ruins of the Palestinian Arab people and denies its very existence. Subsequently Is-

rael conducted a policy of cooperation with imperialism and tried to curb the process of national and social liberation of the Arab peoples. And now, after the aggression of June 1967, it discloses its aspiration to establish a Greater Israel by annexing the occupied territories and creating accomplished facts.

In the eyes of the Arab peoples the State of Israel has been turned into a striking force which cooperates with imperialism and fulfils the task of a reactionary international policeman. In their view, opposition to the State of Israel means opposition to this striking force.

But the understanding of the motives of these forces does not change the following outstanding facts:

1. Historical development turned Palestine into a bi-national country; the fact that imperialism and Zionism took a part in this, does not change the existing situation.
2. The solution of 1947 based itself on the recognition of the right of each of the two peoples to self-determination and to establishing its state.
3. The aggressiveness of the Israeli rulers cancels neither the right of the Palestinian Arab people nor of the Israeli people.
4. The recognition of the Jews to remain where they are now necessitates the recognition of their right to independent political existence.
5. It is of course possible to think about future forms of various economic and political relations between Israel and the Arab world, under conditions of realization of the rights of the two peoples of the country, under conditions of liberation of the region from the influence of imperialism and of independence from it, under conditions of equality and free, sovereign determination.

The Political Solution

The opposition to the existence of the State of Israel makes it difficult to come to a political solution. The armed Palestinian organizations have proclaimed their

opposition to the Security Council Resolution of November 22, 1967, and their armed struggle as being the way to realize the "Palestinian national liberation."

The continuation of warfare on the cease-fire lines in this form or another, hints at the danger of a general Arab-Israeli confrontation.

It may be pointed out that the obduracy of the Israeli rulers and their refusal to withdraw, because of their aspiration for expansion and their response to the demands of American imperialism -- are obstructing the road to a political solution that would safeguard the rights of the two peoples, the Israeli and the Arab peoples.

However, all this does not eliminate the possibilities of a political settlement. One of the important factors that open a breach for a political settlement is the international balance-of-forces, which tends in favor of socialism and liberation, and which creates conditions for further developments which will help along the defeat of imperialism and the compulsion of the Israeli rulers to withdraw.

The tendency of the balance-of-forces in favor of socialism and liberation stopped the military defeat consequent to the June war and averted its being turned into a political defeat which would have overthrown the progressive regimes; it preserved the revolutionary activity in the Arab world, an activity which assisted the peoples of Sudan and Libya to join the group of anti-imperialist Arab states and limited the possibilities of intervention and maneuverability of American imperialism, as we have witnessed at the time of the latest crisis in Lebanon.

The development of the balance-of-forces in favor of socialism and liberation continues despite temporary retreats here and there. It is hastened by the sliding-down of imperialism due to the successes of the peoples in Asia (the American defeat in Vietnam and the awakening of the Japanese people), and in Latin America (the revolution in Peru and in Bolivia, and the failure of

the reactionary coup in Chile). It is also hastened by the increased social struggle in the USA itself and generally in the big capitalist countries.

Therefore the time does not work in favor of imperialism and not in favor of its policy of force, but in favor of a political settlement.

Another factor is the readiness of Arab countries to adopt the political settlement. This has been stressed in Al-Ahram (11/11/69), where the American interpretation was repudiated, which had said that President Gamal Abdel Nasser's speech closed the door to a political solution.

"What the UAR rejects is not peace. It rejects, as the President has said, surrender and expansion. For it is impossible that striving for expansion and claims of peace might go hand in hand," says Al-Ahram.

The truth is that the leaders of the progressive Arab countries have not closed the door to peace, despite the obstinacy of the Israeli rulers, their opposition to a political settlement and their being supported by the USA which supplies them with the most modern weapons and political backing.

Such was also the case on November 10, 1969, at the reception given by the Supreme Soviet to the Sudanese delegation. In reply to the greeting of President Podgorny, the Sudanese Prime Minister Jaafar al-Numeiry, said: "The withdrawal of the Israeli forces from all the occupied Arab areas must be brought about immediately and unconditionally. This is the logical preliminary of the just solution of the Palestinian problem."

But this readiness for a political solution does not diminish the peril of the explosion as long as the rulers of Israel, with the support of the USA, continue obstructing the road to a political solution. It is this obstruction which encourages the strengthening of the notion of the military solution, irrespective of its dimensions and consequences.

Hence, apart from the necessity of stressing the oppor-

tunities for a political settlement and putting it in the front place, it must be pointed out that the key to a political solution lies in the hands of Israel and the USA. This imposes on the Israeli people historic duties. The most important one of these is to force the rulers of Israel to retreat to positions of peace.

Here again the dangers are revealed which originate in the non-recognition of the right of the Israeli people to its state and the reactionary attitude on this question. For this erroneous stand pushes the Israeli masses into the arms of reaction and imperialism, and falsifies the image of the struggle of the Arab peoples for the liquidation of the results of the aggression and for achieving the rights of the Palestinian Arab people.

A correct, principled, comprehensive and anti-imperialist attitude of the Arab movement for national liberation, such as we have here expounded, would doubtlessly assist the anti-imperialist struggle in the region and in the world, and also the forces of progress and peace in Israel, the Communist Party of Israel, in their struggle against the policy of expansion and annexation, and now particularly - for mobilizing forces for the implementation of the Security Council Resolution, which is for the benefit of peace, for the benefit of all the peoples of the region, for the benefit of social progress in the Middle East.

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